

April 8, 1999

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Dear Mr. Jaffe:

It has come to my attention that the lives of today's hens are miserable enough to begin with: Hens used for their eggs are squeezed with up to five others into an indoor, wire cage with floor space the size of a folded newspaper. Born to flap their wings and walk around, these chickens are barely able to move; most can never even sit comfortably. To stop them from pecking at each other out of desperation, workers slice off the chicks' beaks with a hot blade, sometimes accidentally removing part of the birds' tongues or faces as well.

But when egg production drops, at least 75 percent of the 260 million laying hens in North America endure another bizarre torment: Producers attempt to force one last laying cycle out of the exhausted spent hens before sending them to slaughter. They do it by cruelly and unnaturally forcing the hens into a "molt." In nature, hens replace old feathers with new ones every single year and spend about four months dropping old feathers and growing new ones. During molting season, hens don't produce eggs--an interruption that factory farmers find unacceptably unprofitable.

Forced molting throws hens' systems into collapse, stressing and shocking them into losing their feathers quickly and forcing their worn-out bodies into a new laying cycle.

Research shows that forced molting is a major cause of salmonella poisoning in eggs. The stressful conditions weaken the birds' immune systems so badly that they become prone to disease, bone breakage and salmonella infections. The result is sick birds and contaminated eggs.

I support the petition to ban the forced molting of layer hens (docket 98P-0203/CP). I would appreciate it if you could do all that you are able to do to make this petition go into effect. These hens also need better living conditions and a better life. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

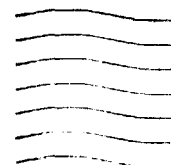
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